

Laurens Majors aims for long summer run

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

The Laurens Majors (12- under) Little League All-Star baseball team is gearing up for what it hopes to be another successful summer - and new head coach Luke Tollison has kept things simple as the team prepares for its best-of-three district playoff series with Easley, which begins Monday night at Laurens City Park.

It's a message that he also used with Laurens Academy, where he helped the Crusaders get to the playoffs in his first year as head coach this past spring.

"I tell my high school team, if you throw strikes and you don't make errors in the field, you have a chance to win any game you're in," Tollison said. "We're trying to do the same thing here."

Tollison's squad has a lot of speed - even more than he expected coming into the tournament - and good hitting. Tollison said the team doesn't have much of a drop-off from one player to the next. While it doesn't have what Tollison described as the prototypical big guy in the middle, everyone can run and put the ball in play.

Looking at his roster, Tollison sees Josh Goodwin and Dee Suber in the group that will help set the table, while Buster Harris and Jared Willard are among the hitters who could help drive in runs in the middle of the lineup.

On defense, Tollison's group is keyed by Suber and Goodwin up the middle of the infield, while there is some flexibility at both corners. Tollison hasn't announced who will play those spots yet, but said there are at least two in the running for third

base, and 3-4 in the mix to play first. Willard is likely to play a lot behind the plate and catch a group of pitchers that includes Jayheem Coleman, Coleman Coker and Jireh Brown.

"We've got some guys who have some good breaking balls, can throw fastballs. We have guys who only throw fastballs and change-ups," Tollison said. "We've got a good mix of different abilities on the team, which really helps out."

In the outfield, Tollison is looking to Brown, Kamron Pittman, Ryland Paxton and Javious Williams can play any of the three positions, and will all get good opportunities to play against Easley.

The toughest part of an all-star team is getting the players, many of whom have not played as teammates during the regular season, to gel in the few weeks before the start of the tournament. If the squad can get past that hurdle quickly enough, and the team plays like Tollison believes it can, however, the belief is things should take care of themselves.

"We're just going to go out there and play how we can play, play to the best of our abilities, and see what happens," Tollison said.

Game 1 of the best-of-three series will be Monday night, while Game 2 is slated for Tuesday night. A potential Game 3, if necessary, will be Wednesday. All games are scheduled to start at 7 p.m.

Roster: Buster Harris, Javious Williams, Kamron Pittman, Jayheem Coleman, Randall Allen, Jireh Brown, Josh Goodwin, Jared Willard, Coleman Coker, Jackson Humphries, Ryland Paxton, Dee Suber, Braden Yarbrough, Jacob Wilson.

Clinton DY gears up for weekend tournaments

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

Friday marked the start of two more summer baseball tournaments, each one featuring a Dixie Youth squad from Clinton.

Clinton's AAA team — made up of ages 9-10 — started its postseason run Friday night when it took on Saluda in Edgefield. Clinton was slated to face either Abbeville or Mid-Carolina in a winner's bracket game today (Saturday) or an elimination game, depending on the outcome of Friday's contest. The elimination game is set for 5 p.m., with the winner's bracket game scheduled for 7 p.m.

The District 3 Tournament runs through Tuesday.

Clinton's O-Zone (ages 11-12) team also started play Friday night in the District 3 Tournament, playing at 5 p.m. against Starr-Iva. Clinton will play either Abbeville or Edgefield at 10 a.m. or noon today (Saturday), depending on the outcome of Clinton's opening game. The tournament is slated for Abbeville and will also run through Tuesday.

AAA: Clinton Head Coach Jeremy Campbell's squad showed some offensive production during a recent scrimmage, scoring 17 runs in the tune-up. Campbell said his team's lineup is a solid group and will bring a good mix of speed and power when it plays its games.

Talon Campbell and Owen Glenn are among those at the top of the order who Jeremy Campbell will be looking to set the table for the heart of the order, with good speed and driving ability. Ryder Rowland is another player who can help set the table and can bunt the ball well. He does a good job of putting the ball in play and not striking out much.

Behind them in the order are Rhett Gilliam, Dalton Williams and Camden Finley, who lead the group of power hitters. Each one has the ability to hit inside-the-park

homers, but all three don't try to do too much and just try to get the four-base hit.

"They stay within themselves and use good, aggressive swings early," Campbell said. "You don't go up there trying to hit a home run. You go up there trying to hit it hard."

Toward the end of the lineup, Aiden Price and Zack Lawson should provide some more balance to the offense. Price has some pop in his bat and could be a good threat to extend big innings, while Lawson also has the ability to drive the ball.

As for the defense, Finley, Rowland and Campbell will share time in the middle of the infield, while each of the corner spots are likely to be split between two guys - Williams and Gilliam at third, Glenn and Taryn Underwood at first. Gilliam and Campbell, if not on the infield, will spend time behind the plate catching a staff that features three hurlers - Lawson, Campbell, and Williams.

Lawson is a right-handed hurler with a good fastball, great mechanics in Coach Campbell's eyes, and the ability to throw a lot of strikes. Campbell also has good velocity and can hit his spots well, while Williams is another high-velocity hurler. Williams is seen as a likely closer with Lawson and Campbell in more of a starter's role.

In the outfield, Lawson will play a fair amount as the centerfielder. Campbell noted Lawson can read the ball well and is able to get a great jump on any ball in play. Asa Baker is likely to play in left, possessing speed and a strong arm, as another speedy fielder - Brian Steele - mans right field.

Clinton's biggest concern entering the tournament was trying to find a vocal leader who will stand out amongst the crowd. Campbell said his team has plenty of guys who are quiet leaders, but he needs someone to take command and emerge in more of a vocal role.

The winner of the district tour-

nament advances to the state round, starting July 21 in Anderson.

Roster: Rhett Gilliam, Dalton Williams, Crue Keller, Brian Steele, Aiden Price, Asa Baker, Ryder Rowland, Taryn Underwood, Owen Glenn, Camden Finley, Talon Campbell, Zack Lawson.

Ozone: Head Coach Graig Glenn said his team, which had been practicing for almost a month leading into the district tournament, still had work to do before its opener. The squad has been hitting the ball well, but is dealing with a number of injuries that have impacted practices for some of the players. Glenn still felt, however, that the team was going to be fine despite the injuries.

Clinton has five players back from last year's team that missed out on a trip to the World Series by one game. That experience will certainly help the team handle any pressure that comes up in the early rounds, and that experience should have a critical impact on the pitching staff as more guys get innings in the mound.

"The ones we have returning are going to be counted on to pitch a good bit. Last year they didn't pitch a whole lot," Glenn said. "This year, hopefully, being able to play a year their experience will carry them."

Tanner Kyko and Tanner Finley are the main pitchers for Clinton's squad. Kyko is a lefty with good velocity that makes hitting off him a challenge. Finley, a right-handed pitcher, can throw any pitch for a strike and has good location. Glenn said both guys, when they are on their game and are hitting their spots, can carry the team a long way.

The hope for Clinton would be to let the two Tanners mop up a lot of the innings and not have to tax the rest of the staff. If that doesn't work out, Clinton will likely look to Lee Malone, Kason Copeland and Jaden Glenn to help stymie

any opposition rallies.

The infield is highlighted by Glenn, who is returning from an injured thumb and the subsequent swelling on his glove hand, at shortstop. Another key infielder is Malone, who has shown some versatility and can play first or third.

Copeland will be behind the plate, with a good arm that could make any runners trying to advance think twice. Copeland, according to Glenn, is the best overall player - with the ability to play short, pitch and catch, and will likely hit out of the cleanup spot in the order. He is also dealing with injuries after breaking a cheekbone recently.

Tushawan Richardson is the key outfielder for Clinton, slotted to play in center, but both left field and right field spots were still in flux entering the tournament.

Clinton's offense will be led by Jaydon Glenn and Kyko at the top of the order, with Richardson and Copeland likely to play in the next two spots, and Malone could find his way into the top five spots in the order as well. Copeland also has the ability to hit the ball out at any time as well for a team that is more of a contact-hitting team, but does have power as well.

"We have some kids who hit one out and they start swinging for it every time," Glenn said. "As long as we're hitting the ball solid, I'd much rather see a line drive than pop-ups."

Campbell said his team has a shot to make it out of the district tournament and advance to state if the players can put the ball in play on offense and make routine plays on defense. The winner of the district tournament will advance to state, which begins later next month.

Roster: Lee Malone, J.J. Dickson, Jacob Chandler, Tanner Kyko, Kason Copeland, Lee Carroll, Chris Boyd, Sam Gearheart, Tanner Finley, Jaydon Glenn, Davidson McMurray, Tushawan Richardson.

Rain is no reprieve for Laurens 10s at districts

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

A Tuesday night rainstorm delayed the Laurens 10-Under Little League All-Star baseball team's second game of the district tournament against Wren. It didn't, however, alter the game's outcome - and left Laurens on the brink of an early exit.

Laurens gave up eight runs in the top of the first inning to Wren in a winner's bracket contest at the J.B. Red Owens Sports Complex Tuesday and could never come all the way back in either case, falling 14-7 to drop into the loser's bracket against Greenwood-Abbeville Thursday night.

If Laurens lost to G-A in Thursday's game, it would be eliminated. A victory for Laurens, though, would move the team into the championship round against host Easley and would require Laurens to win two games in a row over Easley to advance to the state tournament.

Wren's first-inning outburst was brought on more by what Laurens' pitching didn't do than what the Wren hitters did. Wren sent 14 batters to the plate in the inning, scoring eight runs on just two hits, one hit batsman, and eight walks - four of which came with the bases loaded.

Laurens did get a pair of runs back in the bottom of the first to try and get back into the game. Logan Bragg led off the inning with a walk, then came home on a one-out double from Isaac Cain. Landin Harris, two batters later and with two out, then reached on an error that allowed the second run to score.

Both offenses went silent in the second inning before the rain hit, officially suspending the game after approximately 30 minutes of delay due to the field conditions. When the game resumed Wednesday evening Wren got a two-out triple in the third inning but could not score, while Laurens went down in

order. Wren then stranded two runners in the top of the fourth inning without scoring, while Laurens picked up a single run on a wild pitch in the bottom half of fourth, closing within 8-3.

At that point, Wren's offense came back to life, scoring three runs in each of the final two innings it came to the plate. Laurens, by comparison, scored a single run in the bottom of the fifth on a two-out error, then got three runs back in the bottom of the sixth to make the score a little more respectable. Two of those runs in the bottom of the sixth came home on errors, while the other came in on a ground out by Bragg.

COLLEGE Football

PC times released: Presbyterian announced the start times of its 2019 football games Wednesday, including three straight home games to end the season - all starting at 1 p.m.

PC will open the season Aug. 31 at Stetson, located in Deland, Florida. The game time for that is 7 p.m. After an off week on Sept. 7, PC returns with consecutive home games against Jacksonville (Sept. 14, 7 p.m.) and Eastern Kentucky (Sept. 21, 1 p.m.).

After facing the Colonels, PC then goes on the road for five of its next six games. The stretch starts with road games at North Alabama on Sept. 28 (4 p.m.), Campbell on Oct. 5 (1 p.m.) and Monmouth on Oct. 12 (1 p.m.). PC then welcomes Kennesaw State to Bailey Memorial Stadium on Oct. 19 (2:30 p.m.) before finishing the road slate at Merrimack College on Oct. 26 (1 p.m.) and at Hampton on Nov. 2 (1 p.m.).

Presbyterian then wraps up its season with consecutive home games against Gardner-Webb on Nov. 9, Charleston Southern on Nov. 16, and Saint Andrews on Nov. 23.

All times are subject to change.

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